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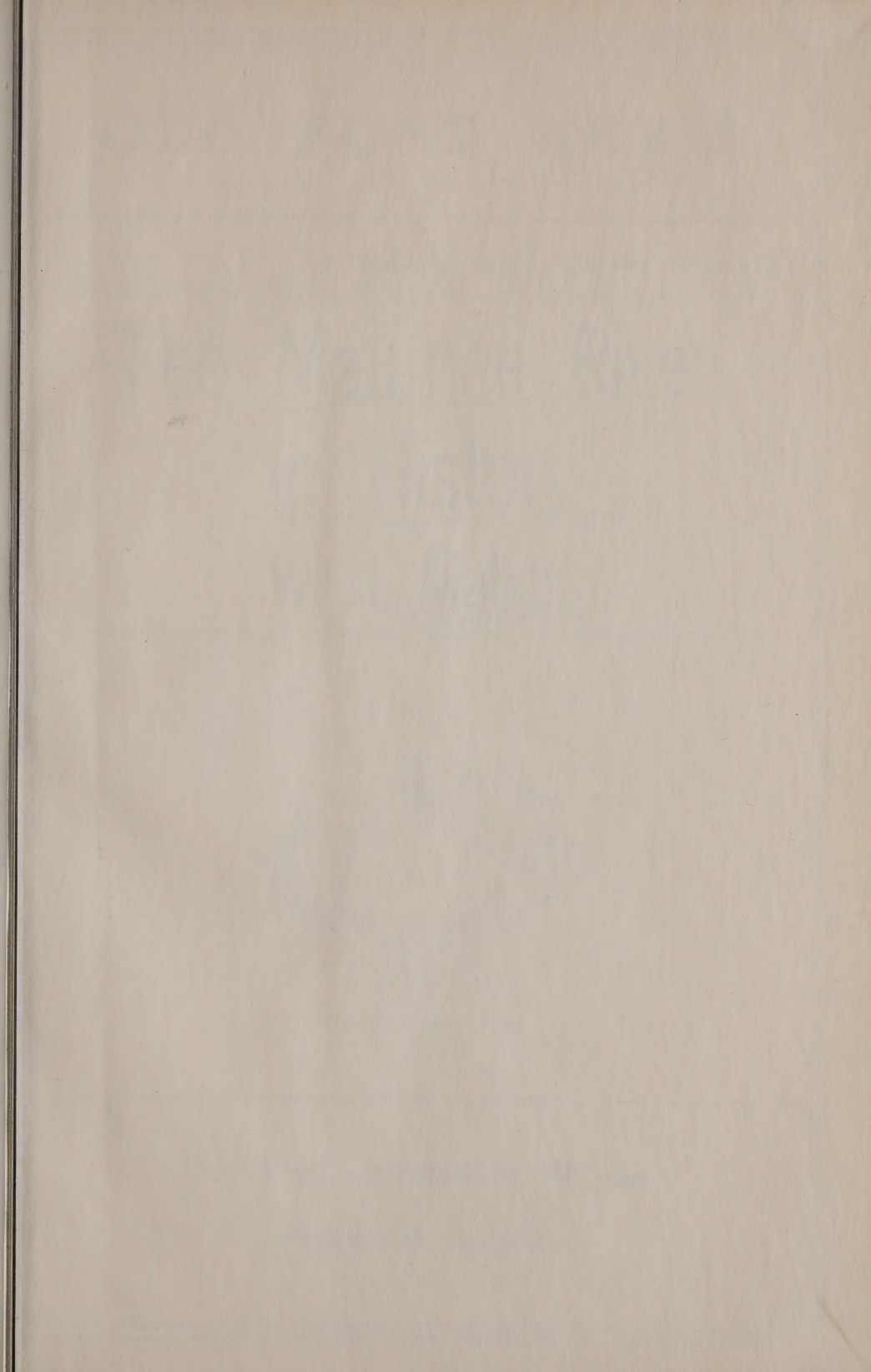
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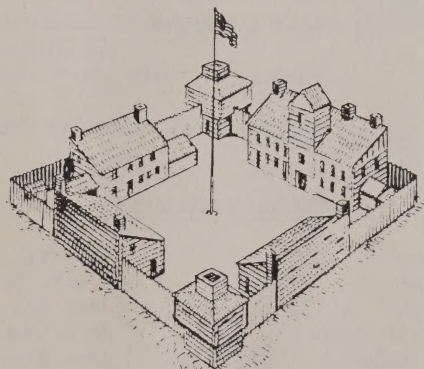
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The Maumee River in History

W. H. Maher



Fort Wayne—1794

The Allen County-Fort Wayne

Historical Society

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FOREWORD

The Maumee River in History by W. H. Maher was originally published in the Toledo BLADE and republished by the Fort Wayne JOURNAL-GAZETTE on June 21, 1908. In the interim marked changes have taken place in literary diction, written exposition and journalistic practices. For the benefit of current readers the text has been altered in considerably more than one hundred instances. Expletives, repetitions, dated references and prolix phraseology have been omitted or modified at editorial discretion. No new facts have been introduced into the text. No facts have been altered. Wherever possible, the original language has been left intact.

The historic Maumee is an integral part of Fort Wayne's heritage, is indeed in a large and important part, Fort Wayne's raison d'être.

The article is a running summary of the many interrelated events which occurred along the banks of the Maumee during the struggle of the Indians, the French, the English, and the Americans to dominate and exploit the hinterland.

It is with deep appreciation of the significance of the Maumee in our own origins that the Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society presents this article to its members.

Rex M. Potterf
Director of Historical Research

MAUMEE RIVER IN HISTORY

The Maumee valley is rich in historical associations, and at the mention of the name there rise up before it the intrepid George Clark; the "Blacksnake," General Anthony Wayne; the calm, careful General Logan; the wily, masterful Pontiac; the sagacious Little Turtle and the no less shrewd and able Tecumseh.

The aborigines who inhabited this section were bold, brave, shrewd, and endowed with an unusually high order of intelligence. In stature the Miamis were of medium height; well-built; and round, rather than oblong; swift of foot, and very fond of racing. They were, from their position less exposed to the poison of the whisky keg, and the example of debauched traders; they retained their ancient character and customs in greater purity than their eastern neighbors.

The Maumee has no beginnings such as we ascribe to the typical river; there is no bubbling spring, or sparkling rivulet, or babbling brook to gradually grow into a broad river. The St. Joseph, from the north, meets the St. Mary's, from the south. At their confluence on the site of Fort Wayne, Indiana, they become the Maumee. This starts, in boldness and strength for Lake Erie. Striking the Auglaize at Defiance, it reaches Maumee Bay five miles northeast of Toledo, after flowing one hundred miles.

The Maumee was known to the early French explorers as the River la Roche; it was also mentioned as Black River. At a later date it was the "River of the Miamis"; it then became the "Miami of the Lake," to distinguish it from the Great Miami, or the Miami of the River, which flowed into the Ohio. Colonel Clark, in his journal, 1779, spells it "Meami," which was probably as he heard it.

As late as 1805 Harris, in his "Journal of a Tour" that he made to Ohio in 1803, mentions the river as "The Miami of the Lake, sometimes called Meami and Maumick." The French would, naturally, give the a in the word a broad sound, ah, and this, to English ears, might well sound like Me-ah-mee, and be easily fashioned into Maumee. Indeed, where Harris mentions the Great Miami he has a footnote saying it is pronounced Mawmee.

EARLY FRENCH EXPLORERS

The Maumee valley was very early known to the untiring French explorers--the priests and the soldiers. By this route, with only two short portages, they had access to the Miami on the south and to the Ohio and to

the Wabash on the southwest, and Mississippi.

It is said of La Salle, the discoverer of the Mississippi, that during the years (1677-8) he was in command at Fort Frontenac, he "appears to have been evolving greach schemes for opening up an easy channel of trade to the west by way of the Maumee and the Wabash."

Hulbert, in his *Historic Highways of America*, says that it was on this river, near the present site of Maumee City, that the first settlement of whites, in the limits of what is now the state of Ohio, was made in 1679.

In 1689 Frontenac, governor of Canada, sent out a number of trading parties, with authority to erect stores or posts, and to take possession of the country visited in the name of France.

One of these parties found its way to the Maumee River, and in 1680 built a small stockade just below the present Maumee City. This was an important trading post for many years, but was finally abandoned for a more eligible location at the head of the river, near where Fort Wayne now stands.

About 1700 a party of traders built a small fort on the Maumee on the approximate site of present day Toledo.

In 1739 de Longuevil constructed a road from Detroit to the Ohio River, which crossed the Maumee at the foot of the rapids, and was thereafter used by the Canadians.

In 1743 the post on the Maumee was built by the French. In that same year instructions were given the commander at Detroit: "Every attempt of the English to settle at Ricer a la Roche (Maumee) must be resisted by (It is impossible to decipher this word because the print is blurred)."

Again, in 1750, complaint was made that: "The English, far from confining themselves within the limits of Britain's possessions, not satisfied with multiplying themselves more and more on Rock River, and with having houses and stores there, have, more than that, proceeded within sight of Detroit, even unto the fort of the Miamis."

In 1754 Governor Morris, of Pennsylvania emits a note of alarm because the French had established a settlement of three hundred families in the country of the Twightwees (Miamis).

In 1760 the war that the French and the English had been waging in America ended in the defeat of Montcalm, on the Heights of Abraham, at Quebec.

After the fall of Quebec, Major Rogers was sent to take possession of Detroit and other French forts along the lake. From Detroit, we are told, the Major went to the Maumee, and thence across the state to Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh).

THE CONSPIRACY OF PONTIAC

The name of the great Indian chief, Pontiac, will always be associated with the Maumee valley. This was his home and his stronghold. Here he planned his treacherous campaigns, and here he came when defeat weak-

ened him. He was the bitter enemy of the English; his ability and guile made him their most formidable foe.

From 1535 to 1760--225 years--the region of the lakes, discovered and traversed by Jesuit missionaries and French fur traders, was under the domination of the king of France, and was designated on the maps as New France. When the French flag was lowered at Detroit on the 29th of November, 1760, this part of Ohio became a part of the province of Quebec.

When the Indian tribes saw the English taking possession of the French forts, they were alarmed. The French had always treated the red men as brothers, had made them liberal presents, and had dealt with them honestly. The English had been cold and harsh, had cheated them in trade, and had outraged their families. These things aroused the red man to a high pitch of excitement. However, it would probably have passed over had it not been for Pontiac, of whom Parkman writes: "The American forests never produced a man more shrewd, politic and ambitious."

Pontiac's plan was to make a simultaneous assault upon all the British posts, and thus extinguish the English power at a single blow.

By favor of an Indian woman, Detroit alone, of all the chain of forts, was saved, but by the treachery of another Indian woman the fort on the Maumee was captured.

CAPTURE OF FORT MIAMI

Fort Miami was near what is now Fort Wayne, and was commanded by Ensign Holmes, who was suspicious of the intentions of the Indians, and was therefore on his guard, when, on the 27th day of May, 1763, a young Indian girl, who lived with him, came to tell him that a squaw lay dangerously ill in a wigwam near the fort, and urged him to come to her relief.

Holmes forgot his caution and followed her out of the fort. Pitched at the head of a meadow, hidden from view by an intervening spur of the woodland, stood a great number of Indian wigwams. When Holmes came in sight of them his treacherous conductress pointed out that in which the sick woman lay. He walked on without suspicion; but, as he drew near, two guns flashed from behind the hut, and stretched him lifeless on the grass.

The shots were heard at the fort and the sergeant rashly went out to learn the reason for the firing. He was immediately taken prisoner, amid exultant yells and whoopings. The soldiers in the fort climbed upon the palisades to look out, when Godfrey, a Canadian, and two other white men, made their appearance and summoned them to surrender; promising that, if they did so, their lives should be spared, but that otherwise they would be killed without mercy. The men, being in great terror, and without a leader, soon threw open the gates and gave themselves up as prisoners.

END OF PONTIAC'S WAR

The end of Pontiac's war came with the arrival at Detroit of General Bradstreet, with reinforcements. The English boats entered the mouth of the Detroit River on the 26th of August, and Pontiac returned to the Maumee, whence he sent a message of haughty defiance to the English commander. Famine and misery, however, influenced most of his followers to desire peace. Therefore they readily obeyed the summons of Bradstreet to meet him in council.

A deputation was sent to Pontiac. That chief now agreed to lead the nations no more in war. He declared, however, that he would never become a friend of the English. He met General Bradstreet at Maumee Bay with offers of peace, which ended the bloody war. This has been described as "undoubtedly the most comprehensive military campaign ever conceived in a red man's brain."

On the 24th of August, 1765, George Croghan made a treaty with the Miamis, by which that nation was to remain undisturbed in its hunting ground. Not long after this, the tribes abandoned their towns on the Great Miamis, St. Joseph and Wabash rivers.

In 1776 mention is made of the presence of Pontiac on the Maumee again, at the mouth of the river. There he is said to have spent the winter living in the forest with his wives and children, and hunting like an ordinary warrior. In 1867, he was assassinated in the vicinity of St. Louis, Missouri.

DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

In December, 1773, Hamilton, the British commander in Detroit, hearing of Clark's capture of Vincennes, determined to retake it. Leading the troops and Indians he ascended the Maumee from Lake Erie. They recaptured the fort at Vincennes, but during the next year Clark retook it and captured Hamilton with it.

In 1780 General Washington directed that the western waters be explored, the navigation of them accurately laid down and a complete map of the country made, at least "as far westerly as the Miamis, running into the Ohio, and into Lake Erie. For I cannot forbear observing that the Miami Village (Fort Wayne) points to a very important post for the Union."

During the Revolution this part of Ohio, due to its remote situation, was but little affected by the war. The British employed the Indians to harass the American settlements on the Ohio and in Kentucky. These joint expeditions (British soldiers and Indian warriors) usually organized at Detroit and proceeded in boats as far as they could ascend the Maumee and thence crossed over to the Ohio. The prisoners taken by the Indians were massacred. The British redeemed the scalps at a stipulated payment. We are told, "Their march through the whole region was attended with the utmost consternation."

A NEW FORT MIAMI

At the close of the Revolution the British refused to evacuate the fort at Detroit and in 1794 built a new Fort Miami on the Maumee near the present site of Maumee City.

This fort is described as situated on a hill which rises abruptly from the margin of the river at the head of a plain. It was a quadrangle, constructed of large, square logs, laid closely together and notched into each other. Strong bastions erected at the two most exposed angles enfiladed three sides of the fort. A deep water-filled moat or ditch protected these three sides. On the side fronting the river there was a covered way down the steep bank to the water.

THE BATTLE OF FALLEN TIMBERS

The Maumee next appears in history through General Anthony Wayne's decisive victory over the Indians at the battle of Fallen Timbers. As in the Revolution, Indian marauding parties descended from this section upon settlers in southern Ohio and Kentucky. The English, undoubtedly encouraged them. After the Revolution the latter refused to abandon either Detroit or Fort Miami and continued to occupy them.

In 1790 General Harmar, an able officer, with a force of about 1,400 men, was dispatched to quell these Indians. He imprudently divided his army, was taken by surprise, and was defeated at what is now Fort Wayne, by a body of Indians, led by Little Turtle.

General St. Clair assumed command of about 2,300 men, and started toward the Maumee. This army was to march from Cincinnati, Ohio, and erect a fort on the site of Fort Wayne, Indiana. It was not properly supplied; it was totally undisciplined, and there was a bitter feeling of jealousy among the officers. Desertions reduced it more than one-third. It was ambushed near Greenville, Ohio, and forced to retreat. "In almost every sense it was the greatest defeat suffered by white men on this continent at the hands of the aborigines."

President Washington commissioned General Wayne to form a new army, the legion. Wayne drilled recruits and fashioned them into a superb fighting force. The new United States government strained every effort to negotiate treaties of peace with the Indians on the Maumee. Their victories over Harmar and St. Clair, however, had made them haughty and conscious of their power. They were determined to make no treaty unless it would establish the Ohio as the boundary of the United States, and reserve all lands north and west of that for the Indians.

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